

## Occupational Health

### *Status of Governmental and Legal Control in California*

IN 1970 the United States Congress passed the Williams-Steiger Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) which gave comprehensive protection against the costs of job-related injury or disease. A Physician's Guide to the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1972 was published in the February 14, 1972, issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (Volume 219, page 905). Reprints may be obtained from the American Medical Association, 535 No. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60610.

The Act preempted all duties, powers and responsibilities of the states, but it did allow for state participation in administration and enforcement of state laws if these met all federal requirements. The United States Department of Labor has adopted some 450 health standards, 20 of which were standards issued by the American National Standards Institute. The others were based on limits and values of the American Conference of Governmental Hygienists. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health is now preparing other criteria documents on toxic materials. Because the process is so slow and there are so many toxic materials and harmful physical agents and substances, many observers believe the preparation of documents will go on indefinitely.

California, in contrast to many states, has had an active occupational health program for many years. State legislation allowing full participation in the federal program passed in October 1973 (Cal/OSHA). Most of California's laws and regulations remain in effect—for example, the regulations governing farm workers reentering grapefields, citrus orchards and cotton fields. The regulations require medical supervision of each

enterprise and physicians should know what pesticides are being used and their effects on humans. Where the federal regulations are not covered by California's regulations, or California's are not as strict as the federal, then California must make the appropriate changes or additions.

Physicians should inform themselves about the detection, treatment and reporting of occupational diseases and injuries, such as poisoning from pesticides. They should know where the poison control centers are located. New regulations, both federal and state, will require greater medical supervision of workers and more medical consultation to employers. For specific questions, the physician can obtain information from his Workmen's Compensation carrier, or the Occupational Health Section in the State Department of Health.

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## Compensating Victims of Violent Crime

GILBERT GEIS, PH D, *Irvine, California*

ON JULY 1 of this year, California effected drastic revisions in its pioneering venture into public compensation of victims of violent crimes.<sup>1</sup> The remodeled program will raise the maximum benefits from \$5,000, the lowest figure among the ten American states which now have compensation programs,<sup>2</sup> to \$23,000. The new California law also alters the eligibility requirement for assistance from "need" to "serious financial hardship," a somewhat more liberal standard, and one that may be defined prospectively—that is, in regard to possible depletion of resources through expenses

From the Program in Social Ecology, University of California, Irvine.

Reprint requests to: G. Geis, PhD, Program in Social Ecology, University of California, Irvine, CA 92664.

This article was prepared by the California Medical Association Committee on Occupational Health.

Reprint requests to: E. G. Miller, MD, California Medical Association Committee on Occupational Health, 731 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94103.